

The Second Face of Human Beings: the Semiotics of Make-Up

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ABSTRACT. *The face is considered as a vital part of semiotics of the body. Emotions, objectives and believes are expressed through facial expressions. Furthermore, along human history, the concept of make-up has been proposed for centuries. In other words, the face after being made-up is a second face including not only the self-image. There are as well many factors, which can affect the style of make-up, including the head shape, the facial features structure, the color of cosmetics etc. Afterwards, by applying Greimas's semiotic square, the relationship between the face made-up and the one without have been investigated, so as to comprehend which face is the authentic self-image of a person. Finally, by analyzing the forms of make-up, the purposes of the self-image embellishment have been researched.*

KEYWORDS: *Make-up, Semiotics, Self-image, Face*

1. Introduction

Finol proposed the criteria, by using which the human body can be divided, in which the division is not only physiological but also semiotic ^[1]. Concerning the vertical criteria, the body can be classified into three levels: the upper, the middle and the lower. Head is included by the upper part while the vital section of the head is the face. As Goffman discusses, Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself ^[2].

The face is not only utilized to express emotions, but also exploited to perform and to confirm self-expressions. Centuries ago, human beings acquired the skill of make-up by applying which, the face can be portrayed.

In the prehistoric age, around 100,000 BC. human beings lived in a dangerous environment with wild animals wandering around. In order to survive, they started to paint on their bodies and camouflaged themselves. As time passing, the form of man painted becomes diversity. It could show the worship for gods. Meanwhile, during a sacrifice in religious or civil activities, the wizards could either wear exaggerated colorful masks or paint the pigments in different colors onto the face or the body, so as to be blessed. So far, some primitive tribes still keep those traditions

and the totems are painted onto the faces or the bodies of the people there to be treated as a symbol of beauty.

In ancient Egypt, make-up was commonly used by both women and men. They rouged their cheeks and lightened the skin with a yellow ochre powder, or darkened it with orange paint. Contemporarily, in the Shang Dynasty of China, make-up was limited in the small groups of nobilities. Red flowers were grinded, and the obtained powder and juice were smeared onto their faces. On the contrary, in ancient Greek, the prostitutes applied the make-up skills to advertise their seduction. Afterwards, the females born in lower-level families as well started to make up.

Within the era of Renaissance, a revival was arisen in terms of cosmetics use. Albeit it is strictly constrained by the Church, personal adornment diffusively gained favor. In the meantime, in the Ming Dynasty of China, different styles of make-up came out and their corresponding names were derived from the appearances in the faces, such as drunkenness make-up and peach blossom make-up.

In recent centuries, on the background of the industrial revolution, the fashion trend of make-up evolved again. Make-up was considered as an essential item for the lady of fashion. Rouge became popular and the red lips, magenta cheeks on a chalk-white face were being fond of. That also gave the birth to the preliminary cosmetics companies. Till recent decades, all different types of make-up have been invented. Consequently, diverse styles can be freely expressed. It is said that those years is an era read from faces. Therefore, cosmetics have already become an essential factor of lives, especially for females.

2. The Concept of Make-Up

Make-up, whose verb version is to make up, not only has a meaning of applying cosmetics, but also means to trick or to entertain somebody. By taking into consideration its definitions, it is not hard to know that make-up is a type of purposely beautification of someone himself, which also gives a certain degree of fraudulence. Therefore, to some extent make-up can be treated as masks in a life. Meanwhile, the different masks correspond to the different identities in the varied social occasions. A face, as a person's concentrative presentation, expresses the emotions as well as characters of the owner^[3].

2.1 The Semiotics Interpretation of Make-Up

Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign^[4]. Peirce asserted that nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign^[5]. As a method of non-verbal communication, make-up can also be regarded as a sign, which owns a complete process of semiosis.

Signs are constituted by three factors: Object, Representamen and Interpretant, as said by Peirce that "A sign, or Representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity"^[5].

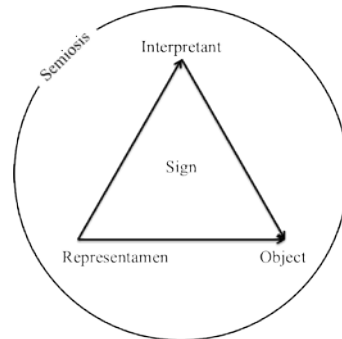


Fig.1 Peirce'S Triadic Model

In the sense of that, the specific images (representamen) painted on a lady's face can be considered as heavy make-up (object), while in different people's eyes (interpretant), diverse explanations can be given. Some could assume that she would go to a club tonight or she could be an open and sexy woman.

2.2 The Factors Which Affect Make-Up

There are some factors that can be affect make-up:

The first one is the head shape, which can be largely divided into two types: Mongolia one and Europa one. Among those Europa one features a greater sense of volume. Meanwhile, the longer inner outline and the longer nose also pertains to Europa one. In compared with Mongolia, Europa has a stronger sense of maturity.

The second one is the straight facial feature, which can transmit a sense of directness and strength. Nevertheless, the curve one stands for gentility and romance. However, it is possible to make up the straight ones into the curve ones, which means this type has a better plasticity in make-up.

The third factor is color. Color is an important part of visual semiotics. Each color is the unit of expression and it is determined by the measure of sovereignty. Each color is connected with other colors in visual communication. Moreover, certain colors feature symbolic significance through social conventionalities. In common sense, red presents enthusiasm and this type of color is generally painted on lips. On the other hand, black represents mystery and respect and this one is frequently used in eyebrows and eyes. Ancient Egyptian treated the make-up as the most important factor in make-up and it is basically in line with the thoughts of modern females. Compared with the static and fixed face, the eyes are surely more flexible and dynamic. Hence, the ability to transmit information is much stronger when the eyes are concerned.

3. The Connection between the Second Face and Self-Image

The concept of self is the cognitive and affective in interpretation of the individual's identity and describes who we are ^[6]. Nevertheless, the appearance is essential to build and to assign the self-identification, which means in general a change in appearance simultaneously occurs with self-transformation.

In 2016, a Hollywood singer Alicia Keys launched a no make-up Movement with the slogan of *Time to uncover*. However, a survey carried by Madeleine Ogilvie writes, the majority of people in this study believed the true self to be the one they presented to the world and this usually included some form of make-up ^[7]. In other words, make-up, as the second face of human being, is a representation of true self or not?

Plenty of people confuse the appearance made up as themselves and deny the faces without make-up as correct signs of true self. This is a typical wrong signal sent to themselves. Moreover, it is also in line with the term of false signs proposed by Peirce ^[8]. It writes, extra linguistic signs can deceive others and oneself. This deception includes instances where people may mistake appearance for reality.

By applying Greimas's Semiotic Square, the nude face is authentic but pale and flawed. Whereas the made up face is energetic, aggressive and radical. The opposite of the nude face is non nude face, interpreted as the partial make-up, which means only the eyebrows or lips are made up. That amplifies the importance of the part intended to show. Besides, the opposite of the made up face is non made up face, it is similar to the nude make-up, utilizes the cosmetics in the color of nudes, in order to express the feeling of non make-up but to be seemed more energetic. In reality, to confront the true self is difficult, while in order to balance the face with and without make-up, beauty and ugliness, fakery and authentication, the application of nude make-up turns to be diffusive. The evident phenomenon is that plenty of cosmetic products have been released, such as BB cream, tone-up cream, nude color lipstick etc. Well within Asia where the traditions are more conservative, those series of products are widely spread. Nude make-up does not only fulfill the demand of self-expression, but also embellishes the appearance to a certain extent. In other words, it is a dose of anesthetic.

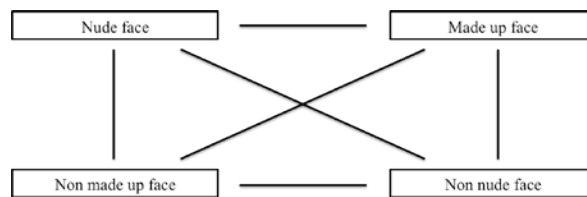


Fig.2 The Semiotic Square of Face

4. Conclusion

The historical meaning and the concept have been elaborated in this paper. The make-ups, as signs, can be divided into different categories also in terms of the

functions and the significances. Nevertheless, make-ups, as the cosmetics existed on faces, are influenced by plenty of factors, such as the head shapes, the facial features, the colors of cosmetics etc. From the opinions of visual semiotics, it is clear that various significances can be expressed by diverse combinations of cosmetics, make-up tools and accessories. As far as concerned, by applying the semiotic square, interpreting the opposite relation between the nude face and the made up face, it is obvious the contradiction is built between the true self and the modified self. Meanwhile, it is also the reason why the nude make-up became famous. Finally, the emergence of make-up, as a complex activity applied on faces, is due to the importance of the face appearances in the minds of people. That as well represents the human beings' willing of expressing oneself, modifying oneself and the pursuit of the feeling of beauty.

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